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Tavistock Urban District



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1954

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

The following members of the Council served on the above Committee during the year :—

CHAIRMAN : A. J. MILL

VICE-CHAIRMAN : J. H. HOAR

MEMBERS : W. H. GULLEY

Mrs. B. HARTNOLL

F. MANN

H. MOORE

F. G. QUANT

L. C. TOVEY

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

Medical Officer of Health

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., D.P.H.

Surveyor and Chief Sanitary Inspector
H. F. ROBINSON, M.R.San.I., M.S.I.A.

Additional Sanitary Inspector and Meat Inspector

H. MANSBRIDGE, A.R.San.I., M.S.I.A.
(Resigned 5.9.54)

H. CHADDERTON, M.S.I.A.
(Appointed 1.11.54)

M.O.H.'s Secretary

Miss M. J. BODDY

Meteorological Observer

Mr. T. H. HARRIS

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Mr. Chairman and Councillors,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1954, in accordance with the instructions of the Minister of Health.

The general health of the town was good throughout the year and the weekly returns of the Ministry of National Insurance for new claims for benefit were below average.

Infectious disease was minimal and none of the dangerous infections were notified.

There was a fall in the number of births from 90 to 70, with the deaths remaining about the same. In spite of this there continued to be a gradual rise in the total population of the town of 47 people.

In general, as can be seen from the accompanying tables, apart from the low birth rate the vital statistics compare very favourably with those for England and Wales.

SECTION A

GENERAL STATISTICS

Area (in acres)	2,098
Population—1931 Census	5,130
Population—1951 Census	5,889
Estimated Home Population—mid-1954 ...	6,220
Number of Inhabited Houses	1,961
Rateable Value	£48,565
Product of Penny Rate	£189
Loan Debt	£495,940

VITAL STATISTICS

		Male	Female	Total	
Live Births	33	37	70		
Legitimate	33	35			
Illegitimate	—	2			
					England & Wales
Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population			... ...	11.3	15.2
Corrected Birth Rate ... ...			... ...	13.1	
Still Births ... ...			... ...	0	
Still Birth Rate per 1,000 live & still births				—	23.4

		Male	Female	Total	
Deaths	44	56	100		
Crude Death Rate per 1,000 population	... ...		... ...	16.1	11.3
Corrected Death Rate ... ...			... ...	10.9	
Deaths from Maternal Causes ... ...			... ...	0	
Maternal Mortality ... ...			... ...	—	0.69
Deaths of Infants under 1 year ... ...			... ...	2	
Infant Mortality ... ... ...			... ...	28.6	25.5

Year	Population	Birth Rate	Death Rate
1946	6,015	12.9	14.9
1947	5,974	16.6	14.2
1948	6,100	11.9	15.9
1949	6,150	11.0	14.6
1950	6,140	10.1	12.1
1951	6,181	10.2	13.4
1952	6,077	13.0	15.8
1953	6,173	14.6	16.7
1954	6,220	11.3	16.1

The chief causes of death were as follows :—

GENERAL CAUSES :

Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	...	...	25
Cerebral Vascular Disease	...	...	...	...	...	...	21
Cancer	...	...	...	...	...	...	18
Coronary Disease	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Arteriosclerosis	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
Disease of the Prostate	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Suicide	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Accidental	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Other Causes	...	...	...	...	...	...	10

INFANTS UNDER 1 YEAR :

Asphyxia	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Prematurity	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
					Total	...	100

AGE OF DEATH TABLE

<i>Age at Death</i>		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Infants under 1 year	...	...	2
1-5 years	...	—	—
5-15 years	...	—	—
15-25 years	...	—	—
25-35 years	...	—	—
35-45 years	...	2	1
45-55 years	...	2	3
55-65 years	...	10	3
65-75 years	...	9	9
75 & over	...	21	38
	Totals	44	56

SECTION B

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES.

The health services continued to run smoothly and it would appear that the ominous prognostications which heralded the National Health Service have been averted, primarily by the exercise of common sense at all levels.

WELFARE FOODS.

The functions of the Ministry of Food as regards Welfare Foods were passed to the County Health Authority during the summer, and a very satisfactory arrangement has been reached with the Women's Voluntary Service under the supervision of Councillor Mrs. Hartnoll for these substances to be dispensed either from the Office or the Infant Welfare Centre.

MATERNITY ACCOMMODATION.

This was the first full working year for the new Tavistock Maternity Unit and during this period 175 babies were born there as follows :—

Tavistock Urban District	...	...	...	30
Tavistock Rural District	...	...	...	96
Other	...	...	...	49

Great exception was taken by "higher authority" to the remarks in my last report regarding the arrangements for admission to this home. As a result of this several conferences were held and once again by the application of common sense an entirely amicable settlement was reached, and I am happy to report that since then no complaint has been received from either doctors or patients.

SECTION C

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA

WATER SUPPLY.

Sufficiency : At no time during the year was it necessary to introduce restrictions as the supply remained adequate for all purposes.

Augmentation Scheme : The construction of the pump house and receiving tank at Wilminstone Quarry has now been completed and the plant is tested weekly to ensure that a supply will be available in the event of an emergency. Two chemical tests were taken during the year and proved to be satisfactory.

Re-organisation Scheme : The provision of a new main from Pixon Lane to Callington Road when completed will give an adequate supply to the Abbotsfield and Uplands Estates and at the same time for the new treatment house and booster plant at Kilworthy to be put in operation. The installation of this modern plant involving chlorination and de-chlorination will obviate fluctuations in the quality of the treated water.

Quality : Routine samples from the Kilworthy and Sandy Park distribution mains were taken during the year and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory at Plymouth.

A total of 12 samples was taken and the reports show that of the 12, 11 were Grade I and 1 was Grade III.

11 samples of the raw water were also taken from the two sources and the reports show that 3 were of excellent purity whilst 8 showed evidence of pollution.

A deterioration in the quality of the raw water is always evidenced during heavy rain after a long dry period and simply emphasises the need for continual chlorination.

The following is the result of a chemical examination of a sample of the Kilworthy supply taken on 7th December, 1954 :—

	Kilworthy Intake				
Chlorine present as Chlorides	1.4
Nitrogen present as Nitrites	0
Nitrogen present as Nitrates	0.22
Phosphates	0
Sulphates	—
Free Carbon Dioxide	—
Total Hardness equivalent to Calcium Carbonate	4.1
Temporary Hardness (annulled by boiling)	1.5
Permanent Hardness (not altered by boiling)	2.6

Saline Ammonia	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Albuminoid Ammonia	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.0008
Oxygen absorbed in 4 hours at 27°C.	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.01
Oxygen absorbed immediately	...	...	...	...	...	...	-
Lead	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Copper	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Zinc	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Iron in solution	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Iron in sedimentary form	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Manganese	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Total Solid Constituents	...	...	...	...	...	...	6.0
Organic Matter observed in igniting the Solid Constituents	...	...	...	...	...	...	slight trace
Hydrogen Ion Concentration equivalent to pH	...	...	...	...	...	...	6.0

Plumbo-solvency : Owing to the low pH reading it was considered advisable to increase the dosage of lime to counteract any tendency to plumbosolvency.

Supply from Piped Mains : The great majority of dwellings in the Urban area have an internal piped supply. A few, mainly cottages in the older part of the town, continue to use taps in the rear yards.

Treatment : The method of treatment during the year was not changed in that the main supply from Kilworthy and the subsidiary supply from Sandy Park were chlorinated by simple chlorination, a residual of .15 p.p.m. being obtained.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

The main disposal plant at Crowndale has continued to deal effectively throughout the year with the major part of the Town's sewage.

Samples of the Crowndale effluent and also the effluent from the subsidiary plant, together with samples of river water from points above and below the points of discharge, were taken during December. The reports show that the effluents were quite satisfactory and had no pollutive effect on the river.

REFUSE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL.

A system of weekly collection of domestic and trade refuse has continued to operate throughout the whole of the area. The sale of salvaged paper and cardboard has materially contributed to rate revenue and thereby helped to offset the heavy cost of refuse collection and disposal.

Good progress was made during the year in generally cleaning up and tidying the Crowndale refuse tip, the present area of which is rapidly filling up.

Your sanitary officers have kept the ever-present rat population down to an absolute minimum.

SWIMMING BATH.

The open air swimming bath owned by the Council was open from May to September and during this period was very well patronised. The usual arrangements enabling the use of the bath by organised parties of children from the local schools operated.

Whilst, of course, the bath does not show a financial profit, it is nevertheless an amenity to the town which is greatly appreciated, particularly by the younger generation.

Routine samples of water were taken from the bath during the season and the reports show that the water was quite satisfactory.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA

109 visits were made to premises as a result of complaints regarding various sanitary defects. The majority of the complaints were dealt with by verbal communication with the persons responsible.

130 visits were made to dwellings during the checking of housing applications when the opportunity was also taken to remedy defects and abate nuisances disclosed during these visits.

DISINFECTION AND DISINFESTATION.

During the year 2 premises were disinfected and 1 disinfested at the occupier's requests. No charge is made for this service.

RODENT CONTROL.

The Public Health Department continued to operate the scheme by direct labour during the year under review and 182 visits and inspections were entailed.

19 Council, private and business premises were treated and apart from the refuse tip and sewers, in no instance was it found necessary to give a second treatment.

FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 and 1948.

1. *Inspections.*

Premises (i)	Number on Register (ii)	Number of		
		Inspec- tions (iii)	Written Notices (iv)	Occupiers Prosecuted (v)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	9	20	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the local Authority	57	52	—	—
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	4	6	—	—
TOTAL ...	70	78	—	—

2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND.

Particulars (i)	Number of cases in which defects were found					Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted (vi)
	Found (ii)	Remedied (iii)	Referred To H.M. Inspector (iv)	By H.M. Inspector (v)		
Want of Cleanliness ...	2	2	—	—	—	—
Overcrowding	—	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable Temperature	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate Ventilation	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors ...	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences:						
(a) Insufficient	—	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective	1	1	—	—	—	—
(c) Not separate for sexes	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL ...	3	3	—	—	—	—

WEATHER.

The Meteorologist supplied the following statistics for the year :—

Height of Meteorological Station—457 ft. above sea level.

Latitude—50.33 N. ; Longitude—4.10 W.

The total rainfall was 58.11 ins. (1953—39.73 ins.)

The average amount of rain is 51.1 ins.

The total number of wet days was 178.

Lowest Dry Bulb Temperature was 25.0 on 2nd February.

Highest Dry Bulb Temperature was 68.7 on 1st September.

Lowest on Grass—11.0 on 2nd February.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Rainfall 1954</i>	<i>Rainfall 1953</i>	<i>No. of wet days</i>	<i>Average temp. per dry bulb</i>	<i>Notes</i>
January	2.26	1.34	11	40.0	$\frac{1}{2}$ " snow on 31st.
February	5.79	2.03	16	39.8	First 5 days hard frost.
March	4.95	1.22	13	44.2	$\frac{3}{4}$ " snow on 1st & 2nd
April	0.55	3.21	4	48.8	20 bright days.
May	4.98	4.62	11	52.4	Thunder and hail 4.15 p.m. on 29th.
June	4.20	4.35	16	55.5	Small hail 11.15 a.m. on 27th.
July	4.42	4.51	17	56.4	Slight hail 6.45 p.m. on 5th.
August	5.38	2.73	15	57.3	Thunder and hail afternoon of 6th.
September	5.82	5.23	21	55.5	Thunder 12.15 p.m. on 10th.
October	5.40	5.22	21	54.6	Hail at 2.30 p.m. on 24th.
November	9.84	4.12	18	48.7	Much wind.
December	4.52	1.15	15	45.1	Much drizzle.
	<u>58.11"</u>	<u>39.73"</u>	<u>178</u>		

SECTION D

HOUSING

During 1954, 24 Council dwellings were completed and occupied making a total of 236 since building recommenced in 1946.

The dwellings completed during the year were erected on the Greenlands Estate, Callington Road and Crelake Park and comprised :—

- 20—two-bedroom houses.
- 4—three-bedroom houses.

In addition to the above, 15 houses were erected by private enterprise and occupied by the end of the year.

The number of applicants for Council houses on the register at 31st December, was 112. Of these 112 applicants, 58 were resident in the surrounding rural area.

It must be borne in mind that there is an increasing desire among rural applicants to obtain accommodation in the urban area even where the householder is not employed in Tavistock, which is probably due to the schooling requirements of the young members of the families.

The following list indicates the different types of accommodation required by the applicants :—

Single bedroom requirements	...	37	applicants
Two "	"	50	"
Three "	"	19	"
Four "	"	6	"
	TOTAL	112	"

5 Council house tenants availed themselves of the Council's offer to allow them to purchase the premises they occupied comprising :—

2-3 bedrooomed houses at Whitham Park.
3-3 , , , Crelake Park.

The greater demand of course is for houses on the Whitham and Crelake Estates as these at the price demanded are a very attractive purchase compared with the high purchase cost of a post-war house.

Several tenants on other Estates have requested a transfer to Crelake or Whitham as vacancies arise with a view to purchase, so there is in effect a waiting list of prospective purchasers.

At the 31st December, 1954, the Council controlled the following Council and requisitioned properties.—

4 bedroom houses (all built prior to 1946)	...	...	...	4
3 bedroom houses (116 pre 1946 and 117 post 1946 = 233 less 14 sold to occupiers)	...	...	...	219
2 bedroom houses (24 pre 1946 and 66 post 1946 = 90 less 3 sold to occupiers)	...	...	...	87
2 bedroom old persons' bungalows—all post 1946	...	...	...	12
Single bedroom maisonettes—all post 1946	...	...	...	34
Two bedroom maisonettes—all post 1946	...	...	...	3
Two bedroom bungalows—all post 1946	...	...	...	4
Requisitioned premises	...	...	...	5
			TOTAL	368

The Council have continued to release premises under requisition whenever the opportunity arose and aim to release all such properties by the end of 1955 if at all possible

CLEARANCE AREAS AND INDIVIDUAL UNFIT HOUSES

RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1954

PART A—CLEARANCE AREAS (Housing Act, 1936)

	Number of dwelling-houses demolished in the period		Number of persons displaced
	Unfit houses	Other houses	
(1) Land coloured "pink" ...	Nil	—	Nil
(2) Land coloured "grey" ...	—	Nil	Nil

PART B—HOUSES NOT INCLUDED IN CLEARANCE AREAS

	Number of Houses	Persons Displaced
DEMOLITION AND CLOSING ORDERS :		
(1) <i>Housing Act, 1936</i>		
(a) Houses demolished as a result of formal or informal procedure under Section 11 ...	Nil	Nil
(b) Houses closed in pursuance of an undertaking given by the owners under Section 11, and still in force	Nil	Nil
(c) Parts of buildings closed (Section 12) ...	Nil	Nil
(2) <i>Housing Act, 1949</i>		
(a) Closing Orders made under Section 3 (1)	Nil	Nil
(b) Demolition Orders determined and Closing Orders substituted under Section 3 (2)	Nil	Nil
(3) <i>Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1953</i>		
Closing Orders made under Section 10 (1) ...	Nil	Nil
 REPAIRS :		
INFORMAL ACTION		
(4) Number of unfit or defective houses rendered fit during the period as a result of informal action by the Local Authority under the Public Health or Housing Acts ...		11
 ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS		
(5) <i>Public Health Acts</i>		
Number of houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices ...		...
(a) by Owners		Nil
(b) by Local Authority in default of Owners		Nil
(6) <i>Housing Act, 1936</i>		
Number of houses made fit after service of formal notices (Sections 9, 10, 11 and 16) ...		...
(a) by Owners		Nil
(b) by Local Authority in default of Owners		Nil

SECTION E

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

MILK

Only two premises in the Urban area are registered by the Council under the Milk and Dairies Regulations, 1949. 10 visits were made during the year to these premises and on no occasion was formal action under the Regulations found to be necessary.

Regular samples of milk were taken from all retailers and submitted for examination to the Public Health Laboratory at Plymouth.

The following table shows the number of samples taken during the period under review and the results obtained :—

Type of Milk	Number taken	Passed	Failed
Pasteurised	15	15	—
Tuberculin Tested	13	9	4
Ordinary	8	6	2
Tuberculin Tested Pasteurised ...	1	1	—
TOTALS ...	37	31	6

ICE CREAM

Two premises are registered under the Regulations for the manufacture and sale of ice cream but only one, where the cold mix method is used, actually operated. A further 23 premises are registered for the purposes of sale and storage only.

All the above premises were regularly inspected and a total of 10 samples was taken during the year and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory.

The reports received graded the samples as follows :—

7—Grade I.

3—Grade II.

MEAT INSPECTION

The town abattoir continued to serve not only Tavistock, but a large part of the surrounding areas until the decontrol of meat on July 4th. From that date the abattoir was divided, the smaller part being used by the town butchers and the larger section by a company (the Plymouth & District Farmers) for the wholesale marketing of meat.

Meat inspection has been fully carried out in both these enterprises by your Inspector, and during the year 15,203 carcases were dealt with, an increase of 1,386 over the preceding year, involving 463 visits to the abattoir.

The number of animals inspected and the carcasses, parts and organs condemned from 1st January—3rd July are set out in the following table :—

CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED

	<i>Cattle, excluding Cows</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep and Lambs</i>	<i>Pigs</i>
Number killed (if known) ...	592	461	457	5249	2389
Number inspected	592	461	457	5249	2389
All diseases except tuberculosis :					
Whole carcasses con- demned	6	23	74	48	9
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	320	281	5	1040	637
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis ...	55.06%	65.94%	17.28%	20.72%	27.04%
Tuberculosis only : Whole carcasses con- demned	5	22	—	—	9
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	21	60	—	—	35
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis ...	4.39%	17.78%	—	—	1.84%

The number of animals inspected and the carcases, parts and organs condemned from 4th July–31st December are set out in the following table :—

CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED

	<i>Cattle excluding Cows</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep and Lambs</i>	<i>Pigs</i>
Number killed (if known) ...	932	174	98	3102	1749
Number inspected	932	174	98	3102	1749
All diseases except tuberculosis : Whole carcases con- demned ...	2	7	8	24	5
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	276	76	1	285	139
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis ...	29.82%	47.70%	9.18%	9.96%	8.23%
Tuberculosis only: Whole carcases con- demned	1	7	—	—	7
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	33	22	—	—	41
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis ...	3.64%	16.66%	—	—	2.74%

CYSTICERCUS BOVIS

All bovine carcases were examined as a routine measure for this condition. 40 cases were found and dealt with in the prescribed manner.

CONDEMNED MEAT AND OFFALS

All the condemned meat and offals were collected from the abattoir regularly by the Ministry of Food Contractors, and after decontrol by approved Contractors.

OTHER FOOD PREMISES

Regular inspections of all other food premises in the town were made. The personal contact thus maintained between your Officers and the food retailing staffs throughout the town was to the advantage of all concerned. Wherever necessary, advice has been given and the fullest co-operation invariably obtained.

The number and type of food premises in the town is as follows :—

Bakehouses	...	...	...	...	...	...	8
Restaurants	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
General Stores	...	...	...	...	...	...	20
General Stores (Wholesalers)	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Sweet Confectionery	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Butchers Shops and Stalls	...	...	...	...	...	...	17
Greengrocers and Fruiterers	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
Greengrocers and Fruiterers (Wholesalers)	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Fried Fish Shops	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Fishmongers	...	...	...	...	...	...	3

The number of food premises registered under Section 14 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for the manufacture of sausages and preserved foods=9.

49 inspections of registered Food Premises were made during the year and no formal action under the Act was found to be necessary.

No educational activity was organised during the year in connection with food handling and preparation, and no Clean Food Guild was in operation.

All condemned food (other than meat and offal from the abattoir) is collected and disposed of on the Council's refuse tip.

No special examination of a particular stock or consignment of food was found to be necessary.

FOOD POISONING

No case of food poisoning was notified during the year.

SAMPLES TAKEN UNDER SECTION 3, FOOD & DRUGS ACT, 1938.

The following samples were taken under the above Act during the year :

Pork Sausages	All Genuine	Hot Milk—Genuine.
Pork Sausage Meat		
Beef Sausages		
Draught Vinegar		
Marzipan		
White Pepper		
Margarine		
Butter		
Coffee Spread		
Ground Almonds		
Mincemeat		
Gravy Browning		
Bread & Butter		

19 samples of milk were subjected to the Gerber Test and all were genuine.

SCHOOL MILK

The following samples were taken by the County Inspector during the year :—

Pasteurised : Total—21. *Passed*—20. *Failed*—1.

SECTION F

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES

The following cases of infectious disease were notified by the doctors during the year :—

Age	Scarlet Fever		Whooping Cough	
	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 1 year ...	—	—	—	1
1-2 years ...	—	—	—	1
3-4 years ...	1	—	1	2
5-9 years ...	—	4	2	2
10-14 years ...	—	—	—	—
15-24 years ...	—	—	—	—
25 & over ...	—	—	—	—
Age unknown ...	—	—	—	—
TOTALS ...	1	4	3	6

The following cases were notified by the schools during the year :—

School	Whooping Cough	Scarlet Fever	Mumps	Chicken Pox
Tavistock County Primary	3	4	10	—
Tavistock Secondary Modern	—	—	1	1
TOTALS ...	3	4	11	1

DIPHTHERIA.

No case of this disease was notified during the year.

TUBERCULOSIS.

4 new cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis were notified during the year. No deaths were recorded from this cause.

At the end of the year 50 cases of tuberculosis remained on the register as follows :—

<i>Pulmonary</i>			<i>Non-Pulmonary</i>		
Males	... ...	27	Males	... ...	3
Females	... ...	16	Females	... ...	4

CANCER RESEARCH : This continued during the year and was extended over the major part of West Devon. It is found that the average percentage of deaths from cancer for the whole area is 15% which is roughly the same for the country as a whole, but there are areas of very high incidence up to 35% and others of very low incidence down to 8%. It is found that the areas of high incidence correspond almost exactly with areas of high mineralisation and the converse obtains with low frequencies. Investigations with Electro-scope and Geiger-counter also show the high incidence areas to be particularly rich in emanations of a radio-active nature. This evidence has been communicated to the Society of Medical Officers of Health and the research continues.

In conclusion I would thank the Chairman and Council for the ready hearing I have received at all times, and the Sanitary staff and others who have materially assisted in the preparation of this report.

I am, Mr. Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,
Medical Officer of Health.

